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SUBJECT: GDRC SPOKESMAN CRITICIZES HUMAN RIGHTS NGO's

REF: A. KINSHASA 731
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 723

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Congolese Minister of Communications and Media Affairs Lambert Mende responded to international human rights organizations' criticism of the GDRC at a July 28 press conference in Kinshasa. Specifically, an International Federation of Human Rights Organizations July report warned of an authoritarian drift of the present regime. A recent Human Rights Watch report criticized the condoning of rape within the Congolese military. A Global Witness report linked the human rights situation with illicit mining and trade of minerals in eastern DRC. Mende denounced the NGOs and alluded to the arrest of a local human rights defender who had published a report implicating the GDRC's involvement in the illicit mining of uranium in Katanga province. Mende's comments indicate the GDRC may be circling the wagons in response to continuing criticism of its human rights record. Further GDRC action against NGOs, both local and international, is possible. The condemnation of the NGOs occurs against a backdrop of other government actions (ref A) that could indicate progress in impunity and corruption reform. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The Congolese Minister for Communication and Media, Lambert Mende Omalanga, responded to criticism of the GDRC by three international NGOs at a July 28 press conference in Kinshasa. Each of the three, Human Rights Watch, Global Witness, and the International Federation of Human Rights Organizations (French acronym "FIDH") had recently released reports critical of the government. Mende said that the three NGOs wanted to try to show that the DRC is a failed state and to vilify its institutions. He also said that the NGOs motives were not altruistic and humanitarian but rather financial and political. Furthermore, he dismissed the critiques of the GDRC as "pure fabrication."

[1](#)3. (U) The FIDH released a July report entitled, "Democratic Republic of Congo: The Authoritarian Drift of the Regime." The report alleges GDRC political repression of opposition politicians, students, civil society, and human rights defenders. It also criticized the increasingly expansive powers of the state security forces and the weakening of the judicial branch.

[1](#)4. (U) Human Rights Watch (HRW) also issued a July report, entitled "Soldiers Who Rape, Commanders Who Condone." It accused the Congolese military (FARDC) of being a consistent perpetrator of sexual violence in the DRC and contributing to the climate of insecurity and impunity in eastern Congo. Specifically, it looked at the abuses committed by FARDC's 14th Brigade and noted that high ranking officers are seldom charged. Subsequent to the release of the report, Radio Okapi reported that the FARDC Goma Military Court, meeting ad-hoc in Rutshuru, condemned a major and lieutenant-colonel for war crimes including rape (ref A).

[1](#)5. (U) Global Witness (GW) released a July report entitled "Faced With a Gun, What Can You Do? War and the Militarization of Mining in Eastern Congo." In the report, GW linked the poor state of human

rights in the DRC with the illicit exploitation of natural resources by armed groups and the FARDC. According to GW, these groups have established lucrative trading networks and earn huge profits through unregulated mining activities and the breakdown of law and order. According to the report, efforts by both state and non-state actors to seize economic, political and military power have led to the carrying out of horrific human rights abuses.

¶6. (SBU) Mende alluded to the recent arrest of Congolese NGO ASADHO ("Association Africaine de Defense des Droits de l'Homme" in French) member Golden Misabiko. Congolese security services arrested Misabiko on July 24 for publishing a report implicating the GDRC in the clandestine trade of uranium from the Shinkolobwe mine in Katanga province. ASADHO Vice-President Georges Kapiamba told us July 30 that Misabiko had been transferred to a detention cell of the Prosecutor of the Lubumbashi Criminal Court ("Tribunal de Grande Instance" in French). Misabiko has been formally charged with defamation and threats against national security. Kapiamba also said that Misabiko is being forced to sleep outside and has been suffering from heart palpitations.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: While the arrest of government critics is not a new phenomenon in the DRC, Communication Minister Mende's comments reveal the willingness of the GDRC to single out international NGOs. The public protest, along with the banning of RFI broadcasts (ref B), do not augur well for the human rights situation in the country. It appears that the GDRC is increasingly intolerant of criticism. Further GDRC action against NGOs, both local and international, is possible. The sentiments expressed by Mende run counter to the notions of progress evidenced in ref A and may also be an ill-timed emotional reaction to the series of critical NGO reports. End

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comment.

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